The Requirements Of The Jilbab

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In the name of Allah Most Beneficent Most Merciful
All praise is for Allah the Exalted and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon His Messenger Muhammad and his family and companions and all those who follow them and their way until the Day of Resurrection

Introduction

"O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" [Al-Ahzaab 33:59]

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts from sin and not show of their adornment except only that which is apparent, and draw their headcovers over their necks and bosoms and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women (i.e., their sisters in Islam), **or their female slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants free of physical desires, or small children who have no sense of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah altogether, O you Believers, in order that you may attain success."** [Al-Noor 24:31]

This article is a brief attempt to define the basic requirements regarding Muslim women's dress (***Hijab***) as stipulated by the Shari'ah (Divine Law) of Islam with a particular emphasis on the jilbab (over garment)

In this short article, we hope to answer:

- Is the jilbab a requirement for an Islamically proper hijab or can a Muslim woman simply cover her hair with her normal house clothes?
- What was the practice of the Muslim Women of the First Generations concerning the jilbab?
- What is considered to be a "jilbab" and what are the requirements for it?

In this article we mention the evidences that are all solidly backed by firm evidence taken from the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the practical application the First Generations. We ask Allah to accept this effort from us and we sincerely pray that this will benefit the readers.

Definition and Description of the Jilbab (Over Garment)

The Jilbab is defined as the covering with which a woman wraps around her body on top of her regular household garments to cover herself from head to toe, and is intended to **completely** hide the shape of her body.

The jilbab has been mentioned in the following ayah:

O Prophet! Say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the faithful to draw their outer garments (Jalabib) **close around them; that is better that they will be recognized and not annoyed. And God is ever Forgiving, Merciful**. [al-Ahzab 33:59]

This ayah orders Muslim women to draw their outer garments about themselves when they go out.

The word *"jalabib"* (outer garments) in the ayah above is the plural of "*jilbab*" indicating that this is a command for Muslim women to wear a "*jilbab*".

Here is how some of the Salaf and other scholars of the past defined the jilbab

Ibn Masud (May Allah Be Pleased with him) said, "Jilbab is that sheet of cloth which is worn on top of the scarf."

Ibn `Abaas (May Allah Be Pleased with him) said concerning the description of the jilbab that "it is to be fully wrapped around the women's body, so that nothing appears but one eye with which she can see." [Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

Al-Qurtubi defined it as "a cloth which covers the entire body..."

Ibn Al-Hazam said: The word *jilbab* means the outer sheet which covers the entire body. A sheet smaller than that which would cover the entire body, cannot be categorized as jilbab. [al-Muhallah, Vol 3. Pg. 217]

Muhammad bin Sireen (May Allah have mercy upon him) said: "When I asked Ubaydah bin Sufiyan bin al-Harith (May Allah be pleased with him) the meaning of this verse and how the jilbab was to worn, he demonstrated it to me by pulling a sheet of

cloth over his head to cover his entire body, leaving the left eye uncovered. This was also the explanation of the word 'Alaihinna in this verse" [Commentary by Ibn Jarir and Ahkam-ul-Quran, Vol.III, p.457]

Qatadah stated that the jilbab should be wrapped and fixed from above the forehead and made to cover the nose, (although the eyes can show) and the chest and most of the face are to be covered.

Other than the above we also find in the following ahadith indications that wearing a jilbab was not only the practice of the women of the first generations, but an obligation for women when they leave their homes.

Abu Dawood related that 'Aishah (May Allah Be Pleased With Her) said: "After this Ayah was revealed the women of the Ansaar appeared like crows." (Because of the color and shape of the cloaks they wore).

Umm Salamah (May Allah be pleased with her) narrated that: When the verse, **"That they should draw their over garments (jalabib) close around them"** was revealed, the women of Ansar came out as if they had crows over their heads by wearing over garments (jalabib).

Umm Atiyya (May Allah Be pleased with her) narrated that "We were ordered to bring out our menstruating women and secluded women* to the religious gatherings and invocation of the Muslims on the two Eid festivals. These menstruating women were to keep away from the musallah. A woman asked, "O' Messenger of Allah! What about one who does not have a jilbab?" He said, "Let her borrow the jilbab of her companion".

***NOTE:** "Secluded Women" here is referring to the virgin girls who would sit in a special section of the house.

Allah states further in An-Nur, 24:31:

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts from sin and not show of their adornment except only that which is apparent, and draw their headcovers over their necks and bosoms and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women (i.e., their sisters in Islam), **or their female slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants free of physical desires, or small children who have no sense of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah altogether, O you Believers, in order that you may attain success."**

The women in the time of jahilliyyah (ignorance) wore anklets which were used to attract attention by stamping their feet and making the anklets jingle. This shows not only that this practice (of stamping the feet to draw attention), is forbidden by Allah, but also that the legs and ankles must be covered as well.

Some are of the mistaken view that a woman may display her feet, a portion of her forearms and her ears, but there is **NO** authentic proof from the statements of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) his Sahabah or the practice of the Muslim women from amongst the Sahabah (May Allah be pleased with them) to support this claim.

Al-Qurtubi, explains: "Women in the past (i.e. before the ayahs concerning covering properly were revealed) used to cover their heads with the khimar, throwing its ends over their backs. This left the neck and the upper part of the chest bare, in the manner of the Christians. Then Allah commanded them to cover those parts with the khimar."

Hence, the Khimar must fully cover not only the hair, but the neck, the shoulders and the chest.

Regarding the feet, this is clarified in the following hadith from Ibn ‘Umar (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) who reported that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said: On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at the man who trails his garment along out of pride. Umm Salamah then asked: What should women do with (the hems of) their garments? He replied: Let them lower them a handspan. She said: Their feet would be exposed! He (Peace and Blessings be upon him) then said: Let them lower them a forearm's length but no more.” [Reported by At-Tabarani]

So it is clear that the dress worn in public must cover the entire body (including the feet) except what has been specifically excluded.

Surat An-Nur spells out specifically the commands concerning the fact that a woman's natural beauty and her adornments are to be concealed from strangers except by (1) What may show due to accidental or uncontrollable factors such as the blowing of the wind or an accidental (i.e., unintentional) look by a non-mahram etc., and (2) What has been exempted.

Therefore, from the above proofs from the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the Statements of the Salaf of this Ummah, we can conclude that a jilbab or an outer garment or cloak of some type must be worn by a Muslim woman over her normal clothes whenever she goes out in public or if she is in the presence of strangers (i.e., men that are not a mahram for her) within her own home or the home of a close relative and that simply covering the hair with a headscarf along with normal clothing is not sufficient.

Garments such as the abaya, the chador, a cloak or other similar garments that are worn over normal clothing can also be defined as a "jilbab" as well as any combination of clothing that covers as a single over garment (such as the Abaya) does.

The Jilbab Must be Sufficiently Thick and Loose

The jilbab should be thick and opaque so as not to display the skin color and loose enough so as not to reveal the shape and size of the woman's body beneath it. Transparent, thin and/or tight clothing which simply cover the skin do **not** meet the requirements of a proper hijab.

We find a very severe warning against wearing this type of clothing in the following hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings Be upon him) said: "I will not be a witness for two types of people who are destined for the fire: people with whips, like the tails of cows, who beat the people (i.e. tyrants who are the enemies of their own people) and women who, although clothed, are yet naked seducing and being seduced, their hair style like the tilted humps of camels. These will not enter the paradise nor will its fragrance reach them although its fragrance reaches a very great distance" [Muslim]

The Scholars have interpreted the Prophet's (Peace and blessings be upon him) statement *"although clothed, are yet naked"* as meaning a woman wearing clothes that do not cover her body properly.

Al-Qurtubi reports a narration from `Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) that some women from Banu Tamim came to see her wearing transparent clothing. `Aishah said to them: "If you are believing women, these are not the clothes of believing women."

Al-Qurtubi also reports that when a woman came to see 'Aishah wearing a sheer, transparent khimar, whereupon `Aishah (May Allah Be pleased with her) said: "A woman who wears such clothing does not believe in Surat An-Nur."

Further proof that the jilbab should be both sufficiently loose and thick can also be found in the following hadith from Usamah ibn Zaid who said: Allah's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) gave me a gift of thick Coptic cloth he had received as a gift from Dahiah Al-Kalbi, and so I gave it to my wife. Thereafter the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) asked me: Why didn't you wear the Coptic cloth? I replied: 'I gave it to my wife.' The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) then said: Tell her to wear a thick gown under it (the Coptic garment) for I fear that it may describe the size of her limbs. [Narrated by Ahmad, Al-Bayhaqi, and Al-Haakim]

So, from this, we can conclude that a skin-tight body suit or blue jeans (for example) which may conceal the skin color, are nonetheless lacking as proper hijab because they still reveal the size and shape of the body.

Additionally, a jilbab that may be sufficiently loosely fitting, but is transparent, would also be lacking because it is not opaque and thick and would reveal the skin color of the woman.

Color Must Not Be Alluring and Should Not Have Attractive Designs

The hijab is intended to conceal the woman and her beauty from public view and should **not** be a thing which actually enhances her beauty or draws attention. Therefore, the jilbab **should not** have bright colors, eye-catching decorations nor have a glossy and/or reflective fabric that will draw the attention of the opposite sex.

The Proof for this is as follows

Allah says:

...And do not make a display of yourselves like the displaying of the ignorance of long ago... [Al-Ahzaab, 33:33]

Abu Dawood narrated from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah Be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Do not prevent the female slaves of Allah from attending the mosques of Allah, but let them go out unadorned."

Imam Ath-Thahabi (May Allah have mercy upon him) says in his book Kitab Al-Kaba'ir (The Book of Major Sins): "Amongst the deeds which a woman is cursed for are; displaying the adornments she wears, wearing perfume when she goes out, and wearing colorful clothes..."

So, the Muslim woman is encouraged to wear soft, somber colors and to avoid jilbabs that contain bright designs, patterns, images, bright colors or any other thing which draws attention. Additionally, as mentioned by Imam Ath-Thahabi above, the jilbab should not be adorned with jewelry and/or perfume.

Many women wear black, **not because it is obligatory**, but because it is the most somber color and farthest removed from being an adornment.

The following report from Abu Dawood indicates that the women of the Sahaabah used to wear black in which 'Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "After this Ayah (Al-Ahzaab, 33:33) was revealed the women of the Ansaar appeared like crows."

The scholars have interpreted part of the meaning of *"appeared like crows"* as meaning that their jilbabs were plain and black.

Also, over garments that could be considered to be libaas us-shuhrah" (extravagant dress; dress of high status, or something worn as a status symbol) should also be avoided in accordance with the hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar (May Allah be pleased with them both) in which Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said He who wears libaas ul-shuhra (extravagant clothing) in this world will be dressed in humiliating clothes on the day of judgement" (Ahmad Abu Dawood)

"Libaas us-Shuhrah" is worn for the purpose of standing out and/or showing off in order to attract attention (Even the same sex) to show how expensive and/or stylish one's garment is.

Must Not Resemble Men's Clothing

A Muslim woman's clothes must not resemble men's clothing (and vice versa).

The Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said: "Allah curses those men who imitate the women, and He curses those women who imitate the men." [Al-Bukhari]

'Abdullah ibn `Umar (May Allah Be pleased with him) said he heard Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) say: The man who resembles a woman and the woman who resembles a man is not from us [Ahmad and At-Tabarani]

So a thick, loose fitting and sufficiently long men's thowb (for example) would **not** be considered to be an Islamically correct jilbab.

Must Differ from the Clothing of Kufaar

A Muslim's clothing must not resemble the clothing of unbelievers. This is a general ruling of the Shari'ah which not only includes dress but manners, religious practices and festivals, and other customs and traditions that are exclusive to the Kufaar.

We find the proof for this in the following two hadith.

'Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`Aas (May Allah be pleased with him) said: Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) saw me wearing two saffron-colored garments, so he said: Indeed, these are the clothes of kufaar (unbelievers), so do not wear them. [Sahih Muslim]

`Abdullah ibn `Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) said: Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) stated: Whoever resembles a people is one of them. [Abu Dawood]

So a Muslim woman should not resemble a Nun, for example, in her dress even if what she is wearing is appropriately long, thick and loosely fitting.

We sincerely ask Allah by His Infinite Mercy to unite our hearts upon His Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger (Peace and Blessing be upon him) and make us firm in our efforts to spread His deen. Indeed Allah is The One with the ability to do that.

Ameen...

And our final du'a is All Praise to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds...